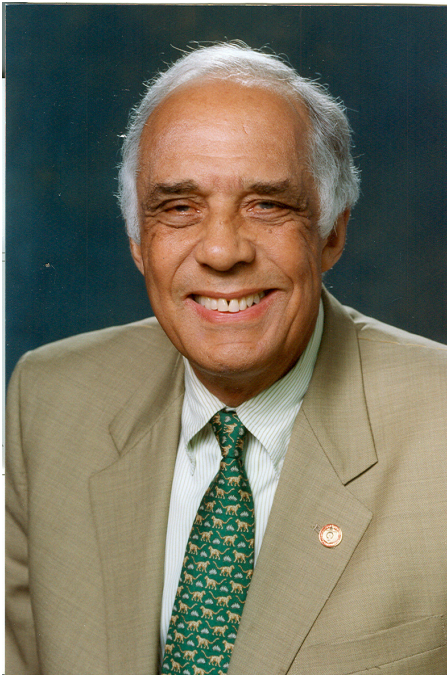


Judge Robert M. Duncan, Recipient of the 2011 UHS Distinguished Alumni Award



Robert M. Duncan – jurist, assistant Attorney General of Ohio, and first black Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court – is the first recipient of the Urbana High School Distinguished Alumni Award. Son of Benjamin A. and Kathleen Wanda Duncan, he was born and raised in Urbana, a true native son, proud of his hometown.

Bob Duncan graduated from Urbana High School in 1945. He played sports – football his junior year and basketball his sophomore, junior, and senior years. He says he was a much better basketball player. He also mentioned that he was ping pong champion. His years at Urbana were rewarding, although he claims to have been a less-than-serious student. There were many activities for students, including art, music, and sports, and he remembers fondly his English teacher Miss Ida Neer and his Latin teacher Miss Zelpha Bowers. During the time Duncan served as chief judge for the U.S Court of Military Appeals, she visited him in Washington D.C. No doubt she was proud of her former and, at times, reluctant student.

He praises the quality of the teachers he had during his years at Urbana High School and says he was very well prepared for his first year at The Ohio State University. Indeed, the importance of education was emphasized not only by the teachers at Urbana High School but also by his family and the members of his church. He remembers that race was never an issue and that all students were encouraged to excel. Such encouragement served him well as he went on to Ohio State after graduating from high school.

His undergraduate degree from Ohio State was in education, with a major in social studies and a minor in biological sciences. Upon graduation from college in 1948, he was unable to find a teaching job at the high school level because he was a black man. After living in Chicago for a short while, he decided to return to Ohio State to pursue a law degree, which he received in 1952.

In 1954, after two years in the army, he began his law career by opening his own office. In 1957, he became Assistant Attorney General of Ohio where he served until 1959, when he became an Attorney Examiner of the Bureau of Workmen's Compensation. In 1960, he served as assistant city attorney in Columbus, Ohio.

From 1965 to 1969, he was the chief of the Workmen's Compensation Section of the office of the Attorney General of Ohio and was promoted to the position of Chief Counsel to the Attorney General of the state of Ohio. Here, Judge Duncan supervised a staff of 125 lawyers and the preparation of opinions of the Attorney General, as well as arguments in the appellate courts. He was a municipal judge in Columbus, and in 1969, he was appointed to the Ohio Supreme Court, the youngest justice and the first black to sit on that court.

In 1971, President Richard M. Nixon appointed Duncan to the United States court of Military Appeals, and he became Chief Judge on that court on January 15, 1974. On July 12, 1974, he was sworn in as Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, after being nominated for that position by President Nixon. After ten years, he retired to return to private practice.

Judge Duncan has served on the Boards of Trustees for several colleges and universities, including Urbana University, Defiance College, and Franklin College. He has also served on boards of the United Community Council, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts.

He is a member of several professional associations, including the American Bar Association, the American Bar Foundation, the Columbus and Ohio State Bar Associations, the Federal Bar Association, and the American Judicature Society.

He has received numerous awards and honors, including the Ohio Bar Medal for “unusually meritorious service,” the Ralph D. Mershon Alumni Award from Ohio State, the Award of Merit of the Ohio Legal Center Institute (a two-time recipient), and the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce’s “Columbus Award” in recognition of his distinguished community service.

In addition, he has received the Governor’s Award for Human Rights, the United Negro College Fund’s Dr. Frederick Douglas Patterson Award, and is listed in the Litigation Section of The Best Lawyers in America. He has received Honorary Doctor of Law degrees from The Ohio State University and Capital University.

According to a classmate, Ellen Logan Martin, he has continued to give Urbana High School English teacher Ida Neer credit for his ability to construct a proper sentence and has been described as “a born gentleman” who still “cuts quite a fine figure.” I have to agree with her. I met him for the first time on May 12, when he received the alumni award as well as the key to the city of Urbana, and I can add that he is truly a gentleman and a scholar.

ROBERT M. DUNCAN

- 1996-Present Vice President and Secretary Emeritus, The Ohio State University
Jurist in Residence, Moritz College of Law, The Ohio State University
- 2004-2008 Ohio Public Defender Commission
- 1996-1999 Ohio Elections Commission (Member)
- 1992-1994 (Retired) Vice President and General Counsel, The Ohio State University
- 1985-1992 (Retired) Partner, Jones Day, Columbus, Ohio
- 1974-1985 Judge, United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio
1974 Chief Judge, United States Court of Military Appeals (now United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces)
- 1971-1974 Judge, United States Court of Military Appeals
- 1969-1971 Justice, Supreme Court of Ohio
- 1966-1969 Judge, Franklin County Municipal Court
- 1965-1966 Chief Counsel to the Attorney General of Ohio.
- 1963-1965 Chief, Workmen's Compensation Section, Office of Attorney General
- 1960-1963 Assistant City Attorney, City of Columbus, Ohio
- 1959-1960 Attorney Examiner, Bureau of Workmen's Compensation
- 1957-1959 Assistant Attorney General of Ohio
- 1954-1957 General practice of law, Columbus, Ohio

EDUCATION

The Ohio State University College of Law, J.D., 1952, Class President The Ohio State University, B.S., 1948

Urbana High School

Participated in numerous seminars and symposia including Columbia University Law School's Continuing Legal Education Program 1982; the Law and Economics Seminar, University of Miami, 1980; the National College of State Trial Judges, University of Nevada, 1971; and the Appellate Judges' Seminar, New York University School of Law, 1969

PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSIONS

- President's Commission on White House Fellows, 1970, 1974
- President's Commission for the Observance of the 25th Anniversary of the United Nations, 1970-1971

BOARD OF DIRECTORS/TRUSTEES

First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Newark (Director)

PAST AFFILIATIONS

- The Ohio State University Board of Trustees (1998-2007) (Chair 2006-2007)
- James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute, The Ohio State University (Chair)
- Columbus Bar Foundation (Board of Governors)
- Ohio State University Hospitals Board (Chair)
- Columbus Childrens Hospital
- American Electric Power Company, Incorporated (1986-2000) (Director)
- Nationwide Mutual Funds (Trustee)
- Online Computer Library Center, Incorporated (1995-2001) (Trustee)
- United Way of Franklin County (Director)
- Columbus Association for the Performing Arts (Vice Chair)
- United States Court of Military Appeals Court Committee (Advisory Body)
- I Know I Can Scholarship Program
- Wake Forest University Law School Board of Visitors
- University of Miami (Fla.) Law School Board of Visitors

- Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce Education Committee (Chair)
- Past President, The Ohio State University College of Law Alumni Association
- Executive Committee, National Council of The Ohio State University College of Law (Past chair)
- President's Club, The Ohio State University (Executive Committee)
- Ohio Courts Futures Commission (Co-Chair)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree, The Ohio State University, Capital University Law School, Central State University, Wilberforce University, Ohio Northern University, Urbana University, Doctorate of Community Leadership, Franklin University
- Award of Merit of Ohio Legal Center Institute, two-time recipient
- Governor's Award-Civil Rights, 1992
- Ohio Civil Rights Hall of Fame
- The Ohio State University Distinguished Alumnus Award, 1992
- United Negro College Fund, Dr. Frederick Douglas Patterson Award, 1991
- The Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce 1990 Columbus Award
- Christopher Columbus Achievement Award, 1986
- American Civil Liberties Union Award, Ohio Foundation, 1986
- The Ohio State University Ralph Davenport Mershon Award, 1986
- Ohio Bar Medal, awarded for unusually meritorious service, 1985
- City of Columbus Cliff Tyree Human Services Award, 1985
- Columbus Education Association Martin Luther King Award, 1984
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Citizen of the Year Award, 1984
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Humanitarian Award, 1980

- Temple Israel Community Humanitarian Award, 1980
- Black American Law Students Associations of The Ohio State University and Capital University Annual Award, 1978
- Columbus Urban League Equal Opportunity Day Award, 1978
- Ohio State University Alumni Centennial Award, 1970
- Franklin University Law School Liberty Bell Award, 1969
- Columbus Metropolitan Library, Julian Sinclair Smith Celebration of Learning Award

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- Fellow, American College of Trial Lawyers
- American Bar Association
- Ohio State Bar Association, Life Member
- Columbus Bar Association
- Columbus Bar Foundation (Fellow)
- Former member of Faculty of Federal Judicial Center
- Sixth Circuit Judicial Conference, Life Member

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Member, Phi Delta Phi Fraternity
- Member, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity
- Member, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity

MILITARY

United States Army, 1952-1954